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Biblical Ideas of Atonement, Their History and Significance.—

By ERNEST DEWITT BURTON, JOHN MERLIN POWIS SMITH, and GERALD BIRNEY SMITH. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909. Pp. viii+335. \$1.00.

This book by three devout scholars of the divinity faculty of the University of Chicago, each a specialist in his department, cannot be too highly commended. For centuries the dogmatic interest has dominated the study of the Bible, and men have gone to the book, not to discover what its writers actually taught, but to find support for their own theories. It is accordingly believed by many that the theory of the atonement which they have inherited from Anselm or Calvin or Grotius is the one theory taught throughout the Bible. These theories were constructed when conceptions of the world prevailed which are now outgrown, and although each of them is different from any conception of atonement that is set forth in the Bible, each of them helped in its day to make the atonement real to men. Within fifty years, however, a new world-view has come to prevail among the great majority of thinking men. This new world-view has made these old explanations of the atonement seem artificial, and the atonement itself to be unreal. Ministers have in many places ceased to make it a prominent part of their preaching, and laymen seek in vain to find in the doctrine a vital interest.

The authors of this little book seek to meet this situation in the only way it can be met. They set forth clearly and simply, though with adequate scholarship, what the conceptions of atonement were which prevailed in the different periods of biblical history; they distinguish in a sane and reverent way between what is permanent and what is transitory in these conceptions; they point out the relation between these permanent elements and the vital problems of modern life, and they point the way to a realization of the heinousness of sin and the vital reality of atonement under the world-view which prevails today.

The work naturally falls into three parts, the Old Testament portion, the New Testament portion, and the theological portion. The Old Testament conceptions of atonement are treated by John Merlin Powis Smith in three chapters which treat respectively of "Atonement in Pre-prophetic Israel," "Atonement in the Prophets and Deuteronomy," and "Atonement in the Later Priestly Literature." Professor Burton has contributed to the book seven chapters which treat of the following subjects: "Atonement in Non-canonical Jewish Literature," "Atonement in the Teaching of John the Baptist," "Atonement in the Teaching of Jesus," "Atonement as conceived by the Early Church," "Atonement in the Teaching of Paul,"

"The Teaching of the First Epistle of Peter and the Epistle to the Hebrews," and "Atonement in the Writings Ascribed to John." A chapter follows written in part by Professor J. M. P. Smith and in part by Professor Burton which gives a summary of all the biblical teachings.

It is impossible within the compass of a brief review to give any adequate impression of the richness and value of these chapters, brief as they necessarily are. The authors have sought to present exactly what the biblical writers teach. In cases where it is possible from the language employed by a biblical writer to understand his thought in more than one way, this is frankly stated, and then by the skill of the trained exegete the reader is with impartial fairness guided to the interpretation that is probably right. In the interpretation of some passages there is room for difference of opinion. The present reviewer would sometimes hold that a view rejected in this book is more probable than the one adopted in its place, but these matters are treated by the authors with such fairness and candor, and it is so evident that the writers' sole aim has been to gain the exact truth, that the reading of their interpretations should be a means of grace to those who are anxious to find the truth, and should also be a help toward living in the spirit in which alone truth can be discovered.

The book concludes with two chapters by Professor Gerald Birney Smith on : "The Significance of the Biblical Teachings Concerning Atonement," and "Atonement in the Light of Modern Thought." These chapters, especially the last one, are able, timely, and helpful.

The most significant portions of the book are the chapters which deal with Jesus' conception of atonement and St. Paul's conception of it, together with the final chapter which seeks to correlate the doctrine with present-day thought. It is made clear by the interpretation of the teaching of Jesus and of Paul that atonement only becomes real as one shares in Christ's life and suffering and work; while in the final chapter Professor G. B. Smith shows how present-day sins, in which because of their social character we all share, inflict suffering and wrong on God's creatures and on God himself; how the sufferings of Christ in resisting sin reveal to us the suffering of God for its conquest; and how they also invite us to find reconciliation by entering into the work of God and of Christ for the conquest of the sins of modern life and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

To the thoughtful reader the book thus makes it appear, though the authors do not formally point this out, that the experience and practice of the gospel as Jesus and Paul conceived it is the one way of revitalizing it in our modern life and redeeming our modern world. This is so because

Christ and Paul insist on an experience that is vital and possible under all forms of thought.

Every minister of the gospel and every thoughtful layman ought to possess this volume and make its contents their own.

GEORGE A. BARTON

BRYN MAWR, PA.

Genesis. By H. G. MITCHELL. [Bible for Home and School.]

New York: Macmillan, 1909. 379 pages. \$0.90.

The book of Genesis—the book of beginnings—is always fascinating and deserves the best scholarship that can be secured for its treatment. Professor Mitchell is an up-to-date student of this book and has brought to his task as commentator a ripe knowledge and a sane method. The policy of this series of commentaries excludes from its notes all processes both critical and exegetical, and gives, on the basis of the assured results of criticism, such explanations and notes as are adapted to the rapid reader. The brief, clear introduction gives an analysis of the five chief documents of Genesis; a clear and sufficiently detailed analysis of the book as a whole; and adds a bibliography of useful material for further study of the historical, topographical, and interpretative study of Genesis. The practical arrangement of the matter on the page of the commentary is especially helpful. At the top we find the translation of the Revised Version of 1885. Before each word or phrase on which comments are given, on the lower half of the page, there stands a hollow circle. And after each word or phrase on which one of the versions supply something helpful, we find a figure, referring to such helps inserted between the translation and the commentary. The outer margin, too, of the translation presents the literary analysis given in the introduction. The volume is well adapted for the class of readers for which it has been prepared.

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